

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MUSCAT 01073 01 OF 02 030856Z
ACTION NEA-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4547

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SANA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MUSCAT 1073

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, PINS, MU, SA, YE, YS

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF COL. SALIM GHAZALI ON SOUTH ARABIAN SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: IN A CONVERSATION ON AUGUST 2, THE OMANI OFFICER WHO WILL SOON BECOME UNDERSECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE STATED THAT OMAN, SAUDI ARABIA, AND NORTH YEMEN MUST REGARD THE PRESENT ADEN REGIME AS THEIR SWORN ENEMY. HE BELIEVED THAT THE PDRY HAS BECOME "ANOTHER CUBA" AND THE AGENT OF A SOVIET PLAN TO DOMINATE THE REGION. OMAN WILL BE AN EARLY TARGET, PERHAPS THE FIRST TARGET, OF ADEN'S AGGRESSIVENESS. THIS WILL PROBABLY
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PAGE 02 MUSCAT 01073 01 OF 02 030856Z

TAKE THE FORM OF A RESURGENCE OF THE DHOFAR REBELLION. THE RESPONSE OF SOUTH YEMEN'S THREE NEIGHBORS TO THE THREAT AGAINST THEM, GHAZALI DECLARED, MUST BE COORDINATED AND SHOULD EXPLOIT THE POLITICAL DISSATISFACTION THAT EXISTS INSIDE SOUTH YEMEN. HE DID NOT FAVOR DIRECT MILITARY INTERVENTION. END SUMMARY.

2. CHARGE AUGUST 2 CALLED ON COL. SALIM GHAZALI AND ASKED HIS VIEWS OF THE SOUTH ARABIAN SITUATION IN WAKE OF THE RECENT ADEN EVENTS. OFTEN REGARDED AS THE MOST PERCEPTIVE OMANI OFFICER IN SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES AND REPORTEDLY CLOSE TO SULTAN QABOOS, GHAZALI IS IN A POSITION TO DISCLOSE THE ATTITUDE OF TOP-LEVEL OMANI POLICY MAKERS AND ALSO TO REFLECT THE ELUSIVE NON-BRITISH MILITARY OUTLOOK HERE. HE IS SLATED TO TAKE OVER AS UNDERSECRETARY IN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE DURING THE LAST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR REPLACING ROBERT BROWNING, THE RAMROD-STIFF BRITISH CIVILIAN WHO HAS HELD THAT KEY JOB FOR LAST FEW YEARS.

3. GHAZALI WAS QUITE WILLING TO TALK CANDIDLY AND AT SOME LENGTH. HE OFFERED THE OPINIONS OUTLINED BELOW. AS WILL BE SEEN, THESE REFLECT A RATHER HAWKISH ATTITUDE TOWARD OMAN'S ADVERSARIES, A VIEWPOINT THAT HE HAS EXPRESSED ON SOME PREVIOUS OCCASIONS TO EMBASSY OFFICERS.

(A) THE DANGERS FROM THE PRESENT ADEN REGIME ARE VERY CLEAR. ABDEL FATAH ISMAIL AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE OPENLY ADVERTISED THEIR EXTREME MARXISM AND THEIR SOVIET TIES. THE PDRY HAS BECOME "ANOTHER CUBA". THUS, THERE IS NO USE FOLLOWING A POLICY OF "WAIT AND SEE" TOWARDS THAT GOVERNMENT (AS MIGHT BE LOGICAL IN THE CASE OF AFGHANISTAN). ADEN IS THE SWORN ENEMY OF NORTH YEMEN, SAUDI ARABIA, AND OMAN.
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PAGE 03 MUSCAT 01073 01 OF 02 030856Z

(B) ADEN'S HOSTILE ATTITUDE IS PROMPTED BY MOSCOW, WHICH HAS DECIDED TO MAKE A PUSH TO DOMINATE THE RED SEA AND THE GULF AND THE COUNTRIES BETWEEN, USING THE PDRY TO ACHIEVE THIS. CONTROL OF THIS REGION IS A LONG-STANDING RUSSIAN DREAM, AND THE SOVIETS NOW THINK THEY CAN WIN IT AT LAST.

(C) THE REASON WHY MOSCOW IS PUSHING THIS POLICY NOW IS THAT IT SEES THE U.S. AS UNABLE TO REACT. THE U.S. HAS THE VIETNAM WEAKNESS "IN ITS BLOOD". MOREOVER, THE U.S. CONSIDERS THAT THE ONLY REALLY DANGEROUS NEAR EASTERN SITUATION IS THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. THAT IS "OUTDATED" THINKING. THE SOUTH ARABIAN CRISIS IS FAR MORE DANGEROUS.

(D) OMAN WILL BE AN EARLY TARGET OF PDRY AGGRESSIVENESS, PERHAPS EVEN THE FIRST TARGET. THIS THRUST WILL PROBABLY NOT TAKE THE FORM OF A NA OVERT MILITARY ATTACK ACROSS THE BORDER, BECAUSE "THE RUSSIANS WOULD NOT BE SO STUPID" AS TO ADVISE THIS. TO BE SURE, SUCH AN ATTACK IS POSSIBLE AND MUST BE PROTECTED AGAINST. BUT FAR MORE LIKELY IS A RESURGENCE OF THE DHOFAR REBELLION. GHAZALI BELIEVED, IN FACT, THAT THIS RESURGENCE HAD ALREADY BEGUN WITH THE EARLY

JUNE INCIDENTS. THE FACT THAT 60 OR SO PFLO CADRES ARE STILL AT LARGE GIVES THE PDRY A MECHANISM ALREADY IN PLACE TO CAUSE TROUBLE. THE OMAN GOVERNMENT MADE A MISTAKE OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, GHAZALI FELT, IN NOT ROOTING OUT THESE REMAINING CADRES. THEIR CONTINUED PRESENCE IS A REMINDER TO THE DHOFAR PEOPLE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT AS POWERFUL AS IT MIGHT BE.

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PAGE 01 MUSCAT 01073 02 OF 02 030850Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MUSCAT 1073

LIMDIS

(E) INCIDENTS IN NORTHERN OMAN ARE ALSO POSSIBLE. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT A BRANCH OF PFLO EXISTS IN THE NORTH. (GHAZALI DID NOT ELABORATE ON THE EVIDENCE FOR THIS STATEMENT.) TERRORIST-TYPE ACTIVITIES ON A SMALL SCALE COULD CONCEIVABLY OCCUR IN THAT SECTOR.

(F) TO COUNTERACT THESE THREATS, GHAZALI DID NOT RPT NOT FAVOR DIRECT MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE PDRY. THE SOVIETS

WOULD NOT SIT STILL FOR THAT. WHAT HE ADVOCATED WAS A CAMPAIGN EXPLOITING THE UNHAPPINESS OF THE SOUTH YEMEN PEOPLE
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PAGE 02 MUSCAT 01073 02 OF 02 030850Z

OVER WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THEIR COUNTRY. SPECIFICALLY, HE NOTED THAT THERE ARE MANY REFUGEES WHO HAVE FLED SOUTH YEMEN TO THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. THEY ASK ONLY TO BE ARMED AND SENT BACK IN TO FIGHT. THEY SHOULD BE SUPPORTED.

(G) ASKED IF SUCH ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE ADEN REGIME WOULD REALLY WORK, GHAZALI MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE THOUGHT THEY WOULD BE EFFECTIVE. BUT, MORE TO THE POINT, HE THOUGHT THAT ANYTHING LESS THAN THIS WOULD BE INVITING TROUBLE. COMMUNISTS, HE SAID, FOLLOW THE HABIT OF PUSHING UNTIL THEY ARE MADE TO STOP, AND IF THEY PUSH AND SEE NO STRONG REACTION THEY ARE ENCOURAGED TO KEEP PUSHING. IF THE UNITED STATES AND THE WESTERN WORLD CANNOT SUPPORT OMAN AND THE SAUDIS AND THE NORTH YEMENIS IN A CAMPAIGN EXPLOITING THIS DISSIDENCE IN SOUTH YEMEN, THEN THESE THREE NEIGHBORS OF THE PDY WILL DO IT BY THEMSELVES. "WE WILL NOT STAND LIKE A MOUSE BEFORE THE LION."

(H) WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN ALL OF THIS, GHAZALI FELT, IS THAT NORTH YEMEN, SAUDI ARABIA, AND OMAN MUST WORK TOGETHER ON A STRATEGY. THEY PDY WILL SEEK TO DIVIDE THEM, AND TEMPTATIONS ALONG THESE LINES MUST BE RESISTED. FOR EXAMPLE, IF ADEN APPROACHES MUSCAT FOR MUTUAL RECOGNITION AND AN EXCHANGE OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, MUSCAT SHOULD SAY NO. SUCH A MOVE BY ADEN WOULD BE ONLY A DIVISIVE TACTIC.

(I) THE U.S. COULD PLAY A ROLE IN BRINGING NORTH YEMEN, SAUDI ARABIA, AND OMAN TOGETHER. IT COULD BRIDGE POLICY GAPS AMONG THEM AND IRON OUT BILATERAL DIFFERENCES. GHAZALI COMMENTED THAT THESE THREE COUNTRIES DO NOT ALWAYS SEE EYE-TO-EYE AND NURTURE PETTY DISPUTES.

(J) GHAZALI FELT IT WAS ALSO IMPORTANT ON A WIDER REGIONAL
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PAGE 03 MUSCAT 01073 02 OF 02 030850Z

LEVEL TO BRING IRAN INTO THE PICTURE. HE SAW THE TRIUMVIRATE OF IRAN, SAUDI ARABIA, AND OMAN AS THE KEY TO SECURITY IN THE GULF AREA.

(K) DESPITE HIS WORRIES ABOUT SOUTH YEMEN, GHAZALI SAID HE WAS "OPTIMISTIC". ONE GOOD RESULT OF RECENT EVENTS, HE REMARKED, IS THAT IT ENABLES OMAN TO TELL ITS FRIENDS

"WE TOLD YOU SO" ABOUT THE PDRY. OMAN HAS LONG HELD THE
VIEW THAT ADEN CANNOT BE TRUSTED, AND NOW OTHER
COUNTRIES ARE BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND THE RIGHTNESS OF
THAT VIEW.
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